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WEAKENING THE GERMAN MILITARY MORALE

THE largest political party in the Reichstag at the time of our entrance into the war was the Socialist, the vast majority and by all means the only influential wing of which was made up of "regular Socialists" under the leadership of Scheidemann. A relatively small group were radical Socialists under the leadership of such far-seeing men and true democrats as Haase, Ledebour, and Bernstein; but this group of the Socialist party was quite without influence until Chancellor Michaelis, in a desperate attempt to save his administration, charged it with causing the much-discussed mutiny in the navy last summer. When it leaked out that there were no grounds for this charge, Chancellor Michaelis had to go, and the immediate political effect was to strengthen the radical Socialists to a degree that makes them now an influential political force, and one to be reckoned with. The political strikes of January and February were undoubtedly the expression of the growth of this radical Socialist party in Germany. The "regular Socialist" party has grown leaner, so that today the Catholic Center party is in the lead in the Reichstag, and such regular Socialists as Brandes, Dr. Erdmann, Huettmann, Jaeckel, are with the radicals. This growth of the radical Socialist party from comparative obscurity to a position of real political power has placed the extreme Right, or Conservative, party in a weakened and isolated position and marked one of the really significant steps in the evolution of German opposition to a continuance of the war.

The evidences of the growth in Germany of a popular desire for peace keep pace with the growth of this autocracy-denouncing party, which growth is not confined to the Reichstag. That there has been a great mass action of the German proletariat is declared by such papers as the New York Socialist *Volkszeitung*. This paper believes that these revolts will "soon be repeated, and will continue until final victory is won." Ex-Ambassador Gerard still sees little hope for a German revolution, but he does see "the German morale nearing the cracking point"—a consummation that may achieve the same result, if it does not have the same manifestations. Rev. Aloysius Daniels, a Catholic priest who has just returned from Germany, reports that the desire for peace among the German people, soldiers and civilians alike, "is rapidly becoming a mania."

Evidences of this breakdown of the civilian morale in Germany are indicated in the popular demand for Von Hertling as Chancellor and for the retention of

Von Kühlmann, notwithstanding the opposition of Ludendorff. Too, the breakdown of the transportation system has done its share towards curtailing the food supply for civilians. This has reacted unfavorably among the soldiers, for they are disturbed about their wives and children. In December, says F. C. Murdock, an American engineer lately returned to this country, a whole regiment in Belgium laid down its arms and started for home to see about the food situation among their women. While this mutiny failed, the incident is suggestive. It indicates that the common soldier is capable of setting a price upon perfect discipline and of demanding payment. To keep down the popular demand for peace, meanwhile, is increasingly a problem for the military party. Recent elections in Leipsic recorded great gains for the radicals. The numbers of deserters into Holland is said to be greatly increasing. The financial situation is more and more acute. All these things naturally sharpen the activities of those who see a chance for peace in the breaking of the military morale and the overthrow of the military parties.

Meanwhile America enters more and more upon the field, and her activities are considered more seriously. The lesson of England's "old contemptibles" is not forgotten in Germany. We have said we would master the air, and Germany has listened. Mr. Murdock declares that the Krupp works are now being rebuilt underground in anticipation of America's aircraft.

The German people are hungry and discouraged. They are losing hope in the air raid, in the submarine, in the Italian campaign, in the Western drive, in Austria-Hungary, and in their other allies. The carefully schemed peace with Russia is now proved of doubtful substantiality or duration. Promises of great food supplies from the Ukraine are not in themselves physically sustaining, and lose their force with extension. The people know that Turkey is starving; that Austria is nearly as bad; that Hungary refuses to assist Austria; and, worse, that the boasted efficiency of the German machine is itself breaking down so far as the well-being of the German civilian is concerned.

On top of all these physical terrors fall the terrific blows of what our French allies are already calling "Wilsonism"—the clear and unmistakable statement of the principles of right and international justice as they must be applied before America will sheath the sword. A man may tighten his belt and face hunger up to the point of starvation, but none may shield his reason from the undaunted reiteration of truth. That such is growing to be the fact in Germany is daily evidenced. In the debate of the Reichstag of January 26, Count Czernin was praised because of his friendliness toward President Wilson's proposals of the eighth; indeed,

President Wilson was himself directly praised upon the floor of the Reichstag. When we reckon that the bold Socialists who approved this are, by their own declaration, "opposed to all votes of credit for the war, that they are for an immediate peace, and that they are opposed to the monarchical system," and when it is realized that all the forces of military disintegration in Germany in one way or another act directly upon the equilibrium of the military party itself and all that it stands for, it would seem that we are justified in believing that the regeneration of Germany is on the way, that disillusionment is bringing revelation to deceived soldier and civilian, and that at last these and their statesmen are slowly and certainly uniting in an irresistible demand for the only kind of peace that America and her allies can grant.

ACTING UPON THE EVIDENCE

IN HIS address of February 11, President Wilson said, "We never can turn back from a course chosen upon principle." We shall not turn back. We are an idealistic people, and our idealisms are increasingly articulate. We are determined, and we are going forth. We are determined that brute force, that perfect expression of autocracies, shall not fasten the fangs of its evil purposes upon unwilling democracies, be they great or small. We are going forth to counteract that force and to demonstrate its futility once and forever. We "never can turn back from a course chosen upon principle."

We are also a practical people bent upon acting in accord with the evidence; and the evidence reveals three definite things. First, it shows that the Imperial German Government is ruthless in its adulation of force. When Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg confessed to the Reichstag, August 4, 1914, that he had violated international law and perpetrated a "wrong" upon Belgium, he officially placed himself and his country upon the platform that "necessity knows no law." The *Jung-Deutschland*, an official organ, argued in November, 1913, that "war is the noblest and holiest expression of human activity." This doctrine has been generally taught throughout the schools of Germany. We do not forget that with Austria as an accomplice Prussia tore Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark in 1864 by force; that two years later Austria's claim to Holstein, because of her agreement with Prussia, was nullified and her assistance repaid with a beating administered by Prussian force. The present German Empire is the offspring of the Franco-Prussian War, a war provoked by a telegram designed by Bismarck as an insult to France.

The creed of force has dominated Germany ever since, a creed of "blood and iron." It is that government that is now working its will in Esthonia, Courland, and Lithuania. Before these words are printed this power may be extended to Petrograd. The one next to the head of the German General Staff, Lieutenant-General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, the most distinguished writer of the German army, confesses with true Prussian insight that "In the future, as in the past, the German people will have to seek firm cohesion in its glorious army and its belauded young fleet." This is the gravamen of his book, "Deductions from the World War." The militaristic idol is evidently worshiped in Germany still, quite as if nothing had happened during these last four years.

The evidence shows also that the Imperial Government accepts the ancient theory of the "divine rights of kings." "The State can do no wrong" expresses the views not only of Bernhardt and Treitschke, but also of the much less radical group of professors, such as Professor Lassan, of the University of Berlin. The Kaiser's proclamation to the army in the East in 1914 contained these words: "I am the instrument of the Almighty. I am His sword, His agent. Woe and death to all those who shall not uphold my will." Such a proclamation from the man who decides questions of war and peace without reference to the people or their representatives is seemingly never challenged by the German people. The Kaiser believes, and his docile people have been led to believe, that he rules by divine right.

But, thirdly, the evidence shows that the Imperial German Government is, largely because of these reasons, a menace, supremely hostile to all democracies, ours included. The significant fact is not merely that the Imperial German Government may dominate the Baltic Provinces, increasing areas of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey, set up a German hegemony in the name of Mittel-Europa, cut Europe in twain, and control with the red hand of might the lands from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf, and thence on to India; it is not that Germany may possess Belgium and northern France; the significant fact is that in this irreconcilable conflict between the will to might and the will to right, between the rights of kings and the rights of peoples, democratic governments, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, must either eventually be stifled, suffocated, battered, and lost, American democracy included, or conquer now, once and for all.

The main world issue is now clear. This war is a fact. We must advance or retreat. There is no middle